



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 24, 2003

Contact: Jack Miller (858) 694-2888

DEAD BIRDS TEST NEGATIVE FOR WEST NILE VIRUS *County Continues to Monitor Presence of the Virus; Additional Tests Pending*

The County of San Diego received confirmation today that three red-winged blackbirds found dead in Escondido's Kit Carson Park have tested negative for West Nile Virus. This follows the announcement last week that a mockingbird found on Dehesa Road in El Cajon had tested positive for the virus. To date, there have been no reports of other animal or locally acquired human cases in the County of San Diego.

Environmental Health staff have been aggressively treating mosquitoes in Escondido and El Cajon. Ground crews have been treating standing water with mosquito larvicides, and mosquito traps have been set out to determine the overall mosquito populations. Surveillance has shown that their efforts are paying off as the numbers decline. Eventually, as the weather cools, the mosquito population will naturally decrease.

Residents can prevent mosquito breeding by removing standing water sources such as plant saucers, old tires, rain collection barrels, uncovered boats, children's toys, dripping water faucets, excessive irrigation, poorly maintained swimming pools, and clogged rain gutters. The public can also help by informing the County about other possible breeding sites including abandoned backyard swimming pools, ponds and creeks.

"While we're happy to report these particular tests came back negative, it is only a matter of time before the virus becomes more prevalent in our communities," said County Supervisor Pam Slater, who represents Escondido. "The county will remain vigilant in tracking this virus and keeping the public up-to-date on its progress."

If you find a dead bird, do not handle it or attempt to collect the bird yourself. **Dead birds do not need to be reported if:** they have been dead more than 24 hours; hit by a car, shot, or killed by animals; are covered with ants or flies; have a foul odor; or if their bodies are not intact. To report dead birds or mosquito breeding areas please call (858) 694-2888

You can protect yourself from acquiring this virus by not going outside when mosquitoes are most active, wearing long sleeves and pants when outdoors, especially at dawn or dusk. When you must be outside use an insect repellent containing DEET. Keep screens on doors and windows and be sure they are in good repair. For more information about the West Nile Virus, call the County's West Nile virus information line at 1-888-551-INFO (4636) or visit the official County West Nile virus website at www.SDFightTheBite.com.

###